

PRESS MATERIALS

Press Materials For Your *Recovery Month* Event

Distributing publicity materials, such as a press release or media advisory, provides positive exposure for any organization or event. This is an important component of ***National Recovery Month: Prevention Works, Treatment is Effective, People Recover (Recovery Month)*** and the events that take place in communities nationwide each September to celebrate the observance.

Recovery Month supports several of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) **Strategic Initiatives**, particularly the goals of increasing public awareness of substance use and mental disorders, health reform implementation, and offering recovery support through an individual, program, and system approach. The Initiatives also aim to help people recognize and seek assistance for substance use and mental disorders with the same urgency as other conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease. This year's ***Recovery Month*** theme, ***"Join the Voices for Recovery: Recovery Benefits Everyone,"*** highlights that behavioral health is an essential part of health and one's overall wellness, and that prevention works, treatment is effective, and recovery from substance use and mental health problems is possible.

Recovery Month stresses that everyone has a fundamental and inherent value to be accepted and treated with respect, human dignity, and worth. Individuals should have access to fully participate in community life, including economic advancement and prosperity; fair and decent housing; quality education; positive opportunities to benefit from and contribute to material, cultural and social progress. The observance also educates people about the impact of health reform and the implementation of the Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act (MHPAEA) on access to treatment and recovery support services.

Use this document as a guide on how to develop and distribute press materials to promote your ***Recovery Month*** events to ensure your celebration is a success.

How Do I Use Press Materials to Publicize My *Recovery Month* Event?

Your press materials should emphasize that your event is part of the national ***Recovery Month*** initiative, sponsored by SAMHSA's **Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)**, within the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**. The content should highlight this year's theme, ***"Join the Voices for Recovery: Recovery Benefits Everyone,"*** and the significance of helping people in need of treatment and recovery support services, while also recognizing the accomplishments of individuals in recovery and those who work in the field to empower them in reclaiming their lives.

Your organization can share several types of materials with the media to publicize your event. For example, a media advisory, press release, and backgrounder can all share timely information regarding ***Recovery Month*** with reporters. Each tool outlined below will aid in building community interest for your event and ultimately encourage the media to become involved in your event.

- **Media advisories**, or media alerts, are simple one-page documents that briefly alert the media to an upcoming event they may want to attend. Advisories should be sent to the calendar editor of your local newspaper, and also the health care reporter or editor that covers local news or events. Advisories provide the basics of what most journalists need to know, and should:
 - Look similar to an event invitation, including bullets covering "who, what, where, and when" with corresponding answers on noteworthy event participants, photo opportunities, and how to schedule interviews.
 - Include the contact information for your organization or ***Recovery Month*** planning committee so reporters can request further details.

- **Press releases**, or news releases, are one- or two-page announcements sent to the media so they will cover your story or event. A release is similar to a condensed news story, which sometimes is repurposed as a stand-alone article in your newspaper. Therefore, information you provide in the press release must be newsworthy. Refer to the “**Working with the Media**” document in this toolkit for factors that reporters use to determine if a story is newsworthy. Press releases should:
 - Contain approximately 500 words, formatted in short paragraphs.
 - Use an inverted pyramid style of writing, meaning the most important information is at the top, filtering down to the less crucial details toward the end.
 - Include a quote from your organization’s spokesperson or key event figure. If you are partnering with another organization, their spokesperson should also be quoted.
- **Backgrounders** are brief documents that contain additional information about a subject touched on in a news release. A backgrounder may accompany the release, or be distributed at your **Recovery Month** event, or to reporters for further information. It can be written in paragraph form, or have bulleted key information. Refer to the “**Fast Facts About Health Reform, Substance Use and Mental Disorders, Treatment, and Recovery**” document in this toolkit for an actual backgrounder to distribute. Consider putting the backgrounder into a frequently asked question (commonly known as a FAQ) format to make it easy to read. Create a backgrounder that highlights:
 - SAMHSA and **Recovery Month**
 - Your organization
 - Your specific **Recovery Month** event
 - Information about substance use and mental disorders, treatment, and recovery support services
 - Information about health reform and how SAMHSA and **Recovery Month** is supporting the positive legislative changes through one of its **Strategic Initiatives**
- Modify the **sample template press release**, **media advisory**, and **backgrounder** at the end of this document and distribute to media outlets when you publicize your **Recovery Month** event. When drafting these materials, remember to use your organization’s letterhead or the **Recovery Month** letterhead found at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>. Additional press materials, including those listed below can be used to raise awareness about substance use and mental disorders and how all Americans have the opportunity to access provisions within the Affordable Care Act and Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act (MHPAEA).
- **Op-eds**, or opposite editorials, provide an opinion on a specific topic or event, and are published opposite a publication’s editorial page. Their purpose is to influence public opinion and create a dialogue about issues affecting your community, such as health reform. Refer to the “**Writing an Op-ed During Recovery Month**” document in this toolkit for information on drafting and submitting one.
- **Letters to the editor** are written to express an individual or organization’s point of view on a particular subject. You can write letters as a response to other news stories, or simply to highlight a timely issue, such as how access to treatment services will benefit from health reform. Use the key messages provided in this document, as well as local statistics on substance use and mental disorders, to convey the importance of recovery.
- **Public service announcements** (PSAs) are non-paid informational commercials, distributed to your local radio or television outlets. PSAs create awareness of **Recovery Month** in your community and helps positively change public opinion surrounding substance use and mental disorders. Refer to the “**Promoting Recovery Month with Public Service Announcements**” document in this toolkit for information on distributing and promoting the **Recovery Month** PSAs to a variety of media outlets.

How Do I Customize My Press Materials with *Recovery Month* Key Messages?

Whether you are raising awareness about substance use and mental disorders or providing information on health reform to your community, sharing **Recovery Month's** key messages and the goals of your event with supporters is essential. If you aren't the organization's spokesperson, be sure to prepare that person with your key messages and get their permission before quoting in your press materials. Show them the "[Working with the Media](#)" piece to ensure they can provide accurate statistics and details surrounding the event.

When developing your press materials, keep in mind the following key points concerning **Recovery Month** and this year's theme, **"Join the Voices for Recovery: Recovery Benefits Everyone."**

- **National Recovery Month: Prevention Works, Treatment is Effective, People Recover (Recovery Month)** is an initiative sponsored by the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's \(SAMHSA's\) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment \(CSAT\)](#), within the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#). The observance, celebrated each September for the past 22 years, honors individuals and families in recovery, as well as those who work in the treatment and recovery services field.
- Substance use and/or mental disorders can affect anyone, but prevention works, treatment is effective, and recovery is possible. It's essential that our community understands that public awareness will increase access for those in need of essential substance use and mental health treatment and recovery support services, including behavioral health treatment.
- Visit the **Recovery Month** website at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov> and **[insert organization's website]** for detailed information on substance use and mental disorders and prevention, treatment, and recovery support services. For specific information on substance use and mental disorders and local treatment options in your community, call SAMHSA's National Helpline at **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**, or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD), for 24-hour free and confidential information in English and Spanish, or visit SAMHSA's "Find Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment" website, <http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment>.

Customize your media materials with local information. To do this, use the following resources, along with any local data available:

- [Single-State Agency \(SSA\)](#) for substance use and mental health prevention, treatment, and recovery support services
- SAMHSA's [National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#)
- SAMHSA's [Recovery Statement](#)
- SAMHSA's [National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services \(N-SSATS\)](#)
- SAMHSA's [Drug Abuse Warning Network](#)
- SAMHSA's [Treatment Episode Data Set](#)
- [HealthCare.gov](#)
- [Kaiser Family Foundation's Focus on Health Reform](#)
- [Mental Health America](#)
- [State Directory of Consumer Affairs \(NAC/SMHA\)](#)
- [The Parity Implementation Coalition's Parity Toolkit](#)

How Do I Disseminate My Press Materials?

Before you distribute your **Recovery Month** media advisory or news release, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the release highlight the importance of **Recovery Month** and your event?
- Are there local experts who could speak credibly to the media about **Recovery Month** as well as treatment and recovery issues?
- Does the event entail a “call to action” that should be explained in greater detail?
- Do I know to whom and where to send my materials?

Refer to the “[Working with the Media](#)” document in this toolkit for tips on building a solid media list.

To distribute electronically, copy and paste your advisory or release into the body of the email. Many reporters will not open unsolicited attachments. Make sure they can clearly see the headline and first paragraph without enlarging or scrolling down in the email, as this will increase the likelihood your release will be seen. Personalize each email so the reporter knows it’s not a mass message. For example, mention a story recently written by the reporter that caught your eye, or if you have had previous interactions with them, mention when and where to jog their memory.

Media advisories are usually sent out one week in advance of an event, similar to a “save-the-date” card. Press releases are ordinarily issued the day of the event, either directly before or immediately following the event. If a media contact is on a tight deadline and needs the information in advance, you can provide him or her with an “embargoed” release. This implies they will honor your request to publish the story after your event or announcement, even though they have advance information.

If you’d like to send your press release to a large number of recipients, there are many online resources available to help you increase the awareness and visibility of your event. Some of these services may charge a fee, so it’s important to research each option before submitting your event materials. Some may offer discounts to nonprofit organizations. Top distribution sites include:

- [Business Wire](#)
- [PR Newswire](#)
- [PR Log](#)
- [24/7 Press Release](#)

Remember to post all of your traditional press materials, as well as any other publicity tools on the **Recovery Month** website at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov> and on your organization’s site to increase event attendance and raise awareness of substance use, mental health problems, treatment, and recovery support services in your community. Once you disseminate your materials, make sure to follow up with reporters to confirm receipt and interest. Refer to the “[Working with the Media](#)” piece in this toolkit for tips on pitching your event, and communicating with your media contacts.

How Do I Share My Event’s Successes?

Promote your organization’s event and encourage substance use and mental disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery support services by:

- Posting your press materials on the **Recovery Month** [website](#) to accompany your event listing. In addition, share the event purpose and outcomes with others through **Recovery Month** social media outlets such as the **Recovery Month** [Facebook page](#), [YouTube channel](#), and [Twitter account](#). Refer to the “[New Media Glossary](#)” and “[Developing Your Social Network](#)” documents in this toolkit for ideas on how to use these online resources.

- Sharing your stories and other outreach efforts during **Recovery Month** by completing the “[Customer Satisfaction Form](#).”
- Sending your promotional materials electronically to recoverymonth@samhsa.hhs.gov or to:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
ATTN: Consumer Affairs
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
1 Choke Cherry Road, Second Floor
Rockville, MD 20857

The Affordable Care Act was signed by President Barack Obama in March 2010. The legislation expands health care coverage while controlling costs and improving the country's overall health care system. Below you can find some general provisions on the new law, some of which are effective immediately, while others will be enacted by 2020. Refer to “Fast Facts About Health Reform, Substance Use and Mental Disorders, Treatment, and Recovery” for more information.

- Medicaid, a health program for low income individuals and families, will expand its eligibility to 133 percent of the Federal Poverty Level and all newly eligible parents and adults without children will receive benefits, which includes essential substance use and mental health services at parity.
- Insurance companies will be prohibited from denying coverage due to a pre-existing condition for children starting in 2011, and for adults in 2014.
- Starting in 2011, young people, up to age 26, can remain on their parents' health insurance policy.
- Most health plans will cover some important preventive services at no additional cost to you, including counseling for a substance use or mental disorder.

Additional Recovery Month Resources

For further information on **Recovery Month** and substance use and mental disorders, treatment and recovery, use the following resources:

- **SAMHSA's National Helpline – 1-800-662-HELP (4357)**, or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD) – Provides 24-hour free and confidential information about substance use and mental disorders, prevention, treatment, and recovery referrals in English or Spanish.
- **SAMHSA's “Find Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment” Website (<http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment>)** – Contains information about treatment options and special services located in your area.
- **The Recovery Month Website (<http://www.recoverymonth.gov>)** – Contains all the materials from this toolkit and a wide variety of relevant resources.
- **SAMHSA's ADS Center (<http://www.stopstigma.samhsa.gov>)** – Provides information and assistance to develop successful efforts to counteract prejudice and discrimination and promote social inclusion.

Inclusion of websites and event examples in this document and on the [Recovery Month website](#) does not constitute official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

[Adapt as needed for your event by modifying the type of event, date, etc.]

[Date]

[Name of Health Care Provider Organization] Holds Forum to Educate [City]'s Citizens on the Impact of Health Reform on Treatment and Recovery Services

Nationwide, 4.3 million people aged 12 or older (1.7 percent of the population) received treatment for substance use disorders, and 30.2 million adults aged 18 or older received services for mental health problems, according to the **2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health**. With the passage of health reform, all American's have the opportunity to access provisions within the Affordable Care Act and Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act (MHPAEA), aimed to improve physical and emotional health while ensuring people will receive the care they need at a more reasonable cost.

To further address the impact of health reform on prevention and treatment services, [organization] will host a community roundtable on [date] to discuss the benefits that recovery has on our society as a whole. It also will focus on how our community members can access the professional care they need to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. For those outside the recovery community, the forum will stress the importance of helping a loved one in need, and educate individuals on a variety of prevention, treatment, and recovery options.

The forum is part of the 22nd observance of **National Recovery Month: Prevention Works, Treatment is Effective, People Recover (Recovery Month)**, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Speakers, including [names and titles] will address this year's theme, **"Join the Voices for Recovery: Recovery Benefits Everyone."** Their conversation will focus on the latest facts about substance use and mental disorder prevention and treatment, how health reform affects service delivery, the way recovery positively benefits one's overall health and well-being, and how family and community is involved in the recovery process.

WHO: [Participants]

WHEN: [Date and Time]

WHERE: [Address of Location]

CONTACT: [Name and Phone Number of Primary Contact for Event]

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SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

[Adapt as needed for your event by modifying the type of event, date, and local statistics as available.]
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: **[Name of person who is available to answer questions from the media]**
[Phone number of contact person – include office and cell numbers]
[Email address]

Recent Legislation Expands Access To Treatment And Recovery Services For Substance Use And Mental Disorders

***[Name of Health Care Provider Organization] Holds Forum to Raise Awareness of Substance Use and Mental Disorders
and the Effect Health Reform May Have on Our Community***

[City, State], [date] – A forum was held today, sponsored by **[name of health care provider organization]**, to raise awareness about substance use and mental disorders in **[city]**. Panelists, including several health care professionals and individuals in recovery, discussed health reform and its positive impact on access to treatment and recovery support services in our community through widespread health insurance options.

In 2009, 4.3 million people aged 12 or older (1.7 percent of the population) received treatment for substance use disorders, and 30.2 million adults aged 18 or older (13.3 percent of the population) received services for mental health problems according to the **2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health**. Several experts, including **[name and title of prominent participants]** participated in the forum today, primarily focusing on the importance of one's overall health and well-being, professional treatment for those with substance use and mental disorders, and how recovery positively impacts our society as a whole.

"Our hope is that with increased access to prevention, treatment, and recovery support services, families, policymakers, businesses, and health care providers, will reach out to those in need to assist them in finding appropriate treatment options," stated **[name and title of spokesperson]**. "Not being able to access the appropriate treatment services, or not knowing where to find these services, should no longer be a barrier to achieving recovery."

The participants discussed the Affordable Care Act that was passed in 2009, as well as the implementation of the Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act (MHPAEA) that was passed in 2008. Under the new laws, Americans will have more freedom and control over their health care, as well as new benefits that ensure people will receive the care they need at a more reasonable cost.

[Name of another spokesperson who participated in the forum] concluded the forum with a brief presentation emphasizing that recovery does benefit everyone. He or she conveyed that combating substance use and mental disorders positively affects the workplace with reduced absenteeism and job turnover, improved productivity, and reduced health care costs. Relationships grow stronger once an individual is in recovery, and recovery positively benefits one's overall health, often improving other health conditions such as hypertension, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

Today's event was part of a national initiative sponsored by the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)**, within the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**. The observance of **National Recovery Month: Prevention Works, Treatment is Effective, People Recover (Recovery Month)**, which takes place each September, raises awareness of substance use and mental disorders, celebrates individuals in long-term recovery, and acknowledges the work of treatment and recovery service providers. **Recovery Month** spreads the message that behavioral health is an essential part of health and one's overall wellness, and that prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can and do recover from substance use and mental disorders. **Recovery Month** highlights the importance of communities nationwide to promote prevention, treatment, and recovery services not only in September, but throughout the year.

SAMPLE BACKGROUNDER

[Adapt as needed by including additional information on your specific organization, event, etc.]

National Recovery Month Media Fact Sheet

What is National Recovery Month?

National Recovery Month: Prevention Works, Treatment is Effective, People Recover (Recovery Month) is an annual observance celebrated each September since 1989. Every year a new theme, or emphasis, is selected for the observance.

This year's **Recovery Month** theme, **“Join the Voices for Recovery: Recovery Benefits Everyone,”** emphasizes that:

- All Americans have the opportunity to access provisions within the Affordable Care Act and Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act (MHPAEA), aimed to improve physical and emotional health while ensuring people will receive the care they need at a more reasonable cost.
- Public awareness will increase access for those in need of essential substance use and mental health treatment and recovery support services, including behavioral health treatment.
- These legislative changes will improve the overall health and well-being of people in the United States.

Refer to the **“Overview”** and **“Fast Facts About Health Reform, Substance Use and Mental Disorders, Treatment, and Recovery”** documents in the **Recovery Month** toolkit for statistics on the prevalence of substance use and mental disorders in the United States, and information on how health reform will impact treatment and recovery services.

Throughout September, events nationwide encourage the following audiences to address the continued need for prevention, treatment, and recovery support services:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| ■ Communities | ■ Prevention, treatment and recovery organizations |
| ■ Employers | ■ Recovery community |
| ■ Civic Leaders | ■ Justice system |
| ■ Health care providers | ■ Faith-based organizations |
| ■ Educators | ■ Social service organizations |

Refer to the **“Treatment and Recovery”** document in this toolkit for an overview of treatment and recovery options.

Recovery Month highlights the benefits of treatment and recovery for not only the individual, but for their family, friends, workplace, and society as a whole. By educating the public that prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can and do recover from these conditions, discrimination associated with substance use and mental disorders and treatment services can be eliminated. **Recovery Month** can help people understand the importance of supporting:

- Individuals in long-term recovery;
- Those in need of treatment;
- Those who work within the treatment field; and
- Treatment and recovery support services.